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**February 28, 1975**

**US National Security Council Memorandum,  
Development of US Policy toward South Korean  
Development of Nuclear Weapons**

**Citation:**

"US National Security Council Memorandum, Development of US Policy toward South Korean Development of Nuclear Weapons", February 28, 1975, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, Box 9, Korea (4). Obtained by Charles Kraus. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/114627>

**Summary:**

A memorandum produced for Henry Kissinger laying out U.S. policy towards the South Korean nuclear program.

**Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Original Scan

MEMORANDUM

1267

## NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

~~SECRET~~/SENSITIVE XGDS (3)ACTION

February 28, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR:

SECRETARY KISSINGER

FROM:

W. R. SMYER *WRS / JRM*  
DAVID D. ELLIOTT *DDE / JRM*

SUBJECT:

Development of U. S. Policy Toward  
South Korean Development of Nuclear  
Weapons

At Tab A is a draft State cable to Embassy Seoul informing the Embassy of the approach we are using to formulate a policy toward South Korea's development of the nuclear capability. The cable also responds to Ambassador Sneider's recommendations on this question (Tab B); we are in essential agreement with Sneider.

Specifically, the draft State cable:

-- Agrees that the ROK has entered the initial stage of nuclear weapons development.

-- Affirms that ROK continuation on this course would have a decidedly stabilizing effect in Northeast Asia.

-- Defines our basic objective as (1) to discourage and (2) to inhibit the ROK effort to develop a nuclear explosive capability or delivery system.

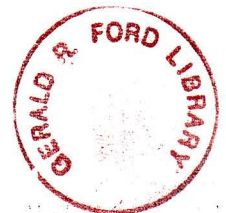
-- Stresses the need to develop our policy toward Korea on this issue within the multilateral framework which we are using for global policy on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons.

-- States that, in consonance with this multilateral approach, we are at present considering the following courses toward the ROK:

- Inhibit ROK access to sensitive technology and equipment both through unilateral U. S. action and through the development of common supplier nation policies.

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E.O. 12958 (as amended) SEC 3.3

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- Press the ROK to ratify the NPT. (The ROK has told us recently that it intends to proceed to ratify the NPT in the near future.)

- [REDACTED] increase our information on the current state of ROK technical development in this area.

We have no objection to the draft State cable.

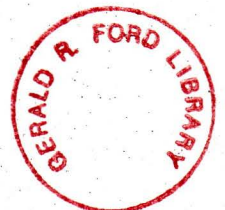
RECOMMENDATION:

That you approve the draft State cable to Embassy Seoul at Tab A.

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-W  
TAGS: MNUC, KS  
SUBJECT: ROK PLANS TO DEVELOP NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND MISSILES

SUMMARY: WHILE IT HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED FOR SOME TIME THAT  
KOREA WISHED TO KEEP ITS NUCLEAR OPTIONS OPEN, EVIDENCE  
ACCUMULATED IN RECENT MONTHS JUSTIFIES STRONG PRESUMPTION  
THAT THE KOREAN GOVT HAS DECIDED TO PROCEED WITH  
THE INITIAL PHASES OF A NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.  
AT THE PRESENT TIME, EVIDENCE IS STILL NOT CONCLUSIVE AND THE  
PROGRAM, AS REGARDS BOTH NUCLEAR DEVICE AND DELIVERY SYSTEM, IS  
STILL IN ITS VERY INITIAL DEVELOPMENTAL PHASE, HOWEVER,  
EVIDENCE IS SUFFICIENT TO MERIT CAREFUL STUDY

END SUMMARY.

1. KOREAN GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS: WHILE THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT  
CONTINUES TO DELAY ANY STEPS TOWARD RATIFICATION OF THE NPT,  
BEGINNING THIS SUMMER

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E.O. 12958 (as amended) SEC 3.3

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A. [REDACTED]

B. [REDACTED]

C. MINISTER [REDACTED] REMARKED THAT DECISIONS CONCERNING THE NUCLEAR PROGRAM TAKEN AS FAR BACK AS 1969 HAD ALL BEEN CONSISTENT WITH KOREA'S DEVELOPING A NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITY BY THE LATE 1970S USING REPROCESSED WASTES FROM THE FIRST POWER GENERATING REACTOR AND SUCCEEDING UNITS.

[REDACTED]

EO

2. ACQUISITION OF WEAPONS-GRADE MATERIAL: AFTER CONCENTRATING ON U.S. RESEARCH AND ENRICHED URANIUM POWER REACTORS FOR SOME YEARS, ROKG HAS BEGUN TO DIVERSIFY ITS REACTOR SOURCES. ITS MAIN THRUST HAS BEEN ATTEMPT TO ACQUIRE BOTH CANDU HEAVY WATER POWER REACTORS AND A RESEARCH REACTOR FROM CANADA. WHILE THERE ARE OTHER VALID REASONS FOR ACQUIRING THE CANDU REACTOR, INCLUDING FAVORABLE CREDIT TERMS, THE CANADIAN REACTORS, PARTICULARLY RESEARCH REACTOR, COULD PROVIDE AN EASIER MEANS FOR EVADING SAFEGUARD CONTROLS AND ACQUIRING PLUTONIUM.

3. ADDITIONALLY, WE HAVE REPORTS [REDACTED] THAT ROKG IS SEEKING TO ACQUIRE A NUCLEAR FUEL REPRO-

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CESSING PLANT WHICH WOULD SEPARATE PLUTONIUM FROM REACTOR WASTES.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] WE UNDERSTAND, HAS CONTRACTED WITH ROK TO MAKE A FEASIBILITY STUDY. MOREOVER, ECONOMIC PLANNING (EPB) HAS IDENTIFIED A PROJECTED FRENCH SOURCE PUBLIC LOAN FOR A NUCLEAR FUEL RE-PROCESSING AND DISPOSAL PLANT.

4. FINALLY, THE KOREAN GOVT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL DEVELOP DOMESTIC URANIUM DEPOSITS TO FUEL THE CANADIAN REACTORS EVEN THOUGH EPB-FINANCED STUDIES HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT THESE RESOURCES ARE LIMITED IN SIZE, AND COMMERCIALY UNEXPLOITABLE IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

5. TECHNICAL SKILLS ACQUISITION: BOTH AGENCY FOR DEFENSE DEVELOPMENT (ADD) AND KOREA ATOMIC ENERGY RESEARCH INSTITUTE (KERI) HAVE BEEN RECRUITING KOREAN SCIENTISTS WORKING IN U.S. BY OFFERING VERY FAVORABLE SALARY AND OTHER INDUCEMENTS. REQUIREMENT FOR SCIENTISTS IF FULLY LEGITIMATE IN TERMS OF DEVELOPING KOREAN ECONOMY AND ALSO PROVIDING SUFFICIENT TALENT FOR ITS NUCLEAR POWER REACTOR AND RESEARCH PROGRAMS. BUT, NUCLEAR SCIENTIFIC SKILLS CAN BE UTILIZED FOR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT.

[REDACTED]

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6. WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT: THE ROK FORCES TODAY ARE EQUIPPED WITH WEAPONS SYSTEMS WITH A POTENTIAL NUCLEAR DELIVERY CAPABILITY, SUCH AS F-4 AIRCRAFT AND NIKE HERCULES; NORTH KOREAN WEAPONS SYSTEMS HAVE SAME CAPABILITY. BUT NEITHER FORCE HAS ACCESS TO NUCLEAR WEAPONS.

7. THE ROKS ARE ALSO ENGAGED IN THE FIRST STAGES OF MISSILE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM WHICH IS LARGELY EXPERIMENTAL AND ELEMENTARY AND IS MAINLY GEARED TO IMPROVED OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF MISSILE SYSTEMS NOW IN THEIR INVENTORY. THERE IS LEGITIMATE ROK CONCERN THAT, AS THESE MISSILE SYSTEMS GO OUT OF U.S. INVENTORY, THERE WILL BE PROBLEMS IN MAINTENANCE AND ACQUISITION OF SPARE PARTS. ADDITIONALLY, KOREANS ARE INTERESTED IN THE LOCKHEED PROPELLANT PLANT IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN AND FURTHER DEVELOP PROPELLANT COMPONENTS OF THEIR ROCKETS AND MISSILES. ADD RESEARCH PROGRAM SO FAR HAS PRODUCED ONLY A 10-FOOT SOUNDING ROCKET WHICH HAS STILL TO BE FLIGHT-TESTED.

8. THERE HAVE BEEN, HOWEVER, INDICATIONS OF KOREAN GOVT INTEREST IN UPGRADING ITS MISSILE CAPABILITIES. ADD HELD DISCUSSIONS WITH MCDONNELL DOUGLAS TO DEVELOP A 200-MILE PLUS SURFACE-TO-SURFACE MISSILE WITH SUFFICIENT ACCURACY TO HIT AIRFIELDS AND OTHER STRATEGIC TARGETS. HOWEVER, WE ARE NOW INFORMED BY MND THAT IT DOES NOT INTEND TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH ITS MCDONNELL DOUGLAS

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PROJECTED CONTRACT, FOLLOWING INKLINGS OF U.S. CONCERN, MND VICE MINISTER CHOI KWANG SOO ALSO RECENTLY TOLD EMBOFF THAT MND HAS NOT YET DECIDED UPON ITS MISSILE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, ALTHOUGH GIVING ADD GO-AHEAD ON PROPELLENAT PLANT.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: EMBASSY LACKS SUFFICIENT EXPERTISE TO PROVIDE CLEARLY DEFINITE JUDGMENT REGARDING ROK NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM, BUT, FROM EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO US, WE CONCLUDE THAT DECISION HAS PROBABLY BEEN MADE TO LAUNCH INITIAL STAGES OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, HOWEVER, IT IS STILL IN RUDIMENTARY STAGE AND LACKING A NUMBER OF CRITICAL ITEMS SUCH AS FUEL RE-PROCESSING AND PLUTONIUM. MISSILE DEVELOPMENT IS EVEN LESS ADVANCED AND AT PRESENT TIME APPEARS TO BE GEARED VERY LARGELY TO SUPPORT OF WEAPONS SYSTEMS ALREADY AVAILABLE IN ROK INVENTORY.

10. WE EMPHASIZE, THESE ARE PRELIMINARY JUDGEMENTS AND WE BELIEVE THAT AS FIRST STEP WE NEED ASSESSMENT OF ANY ROK PROGRAM BY QUALIFIED TECHNICAL EXPERTS.

11. FURTHER IMMEDIATE ACTIONS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR WASHINGTON CONSIDERATION:

- A. SAFEGUARDS INSPECTIONS AT ALL FACILITIES AS PROVIDED FOR IN EXISTING AGREEMENTS BE UNDERTAKEN IN EXTREMELY THOROUGH MANNER.
- B. FORMAL APPROACH TO ROK ON NPT RATIFICATION.

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12. NET PRODUCT OF THESE EFFORTS SHOULD BE WELL-DEFINED AND TECHNICALLY REGINED POLICY ON ONE HAND WHICH PRESERVES MILITARY BALANCE ON KOREAN PENINSULA BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA.

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